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20 June 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Conversation with [REDACTED]

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1. According to [REDACTED] the Operations Office of the State Department performs tasks formerly done both by the Planning Board and the OCB. It was established on the basic premise that State has interdepartmental responsibilities both for the formulation of policy and the execution of policy. Secretary Rusk got an okay to set it up as a result of a particular incident. Defense was supposed to be doing a certain job and Rusk so advised the President. When the President asked a week or so later how the job was coming along Rusk called Defense and found that they were not in fact doing it.

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2. The Operations Office has a small staff of about six people supplied by State. In addition it has a representative from INR, USIA, Defense and CIA. In what was apparently a successful power play by Hilsman, it was decided that no other agency representative would be from intelligence. In the case of CIA, this meant a DD/P rather than a DD/I man.

3. The scope of the work of the Operations Office has not really been determined. In general, it will deal with particularly urgent problems of U. S. policy, on which papers require the attention of the highest levels of government. Other areas will be handled by the area desks at State, and the product will be policy guideline papers. [REDACTED] is of the opinion that there should also be a limitation at the upper end, i.e. he felt that there were certain problems which could not be handled on a task force or similar basis because they were too complex and too important. He had in mind, for example, Berlin. Certain other problems involving mainly the relationship between foreign policy and military policy are being treated by a special State-Defense group and these too will be outside the province of the Operations Office.

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4. At the present time, there are four task forces operating out of the Office, i.e. those on Cuba, Vietnam, Portugese-Africa, and Iran. The Iran Task Force was actually disbanded after producing its report. Then it was realized that somebody had to follow up to make sure that its approved recommendations were being implemented. The Task Force was therefore reconstituted for a meeting on June 20th. The Vietnam Task Force formerly headed by Roswell Gilpatrick is now headed by Sterling J. Cottrell.

5. It is fairly clear that at present the Office is more of an establishment to provide facilities and housekeeping for ad hoc task forces than an organization which independently produces policy papers or follows them up after approval. This is not wholly true, however, because the Office has already taken on itself some responsibilities for following up the implementation of NSC decisions.

6. The Office has not been shaken down as yet and its functions and responsibilities are not clearly established. said that he will keep me informed.

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